

The roles of individual characteristics and institutional support in students' higher education dropout intention in Luxembourg

Andreas Hadjar
Christina Haas
Irina Gewinner

- Dropout from higher education (HE) study programmes remains major issue within global HE systems, particularly vis-à-vis educational policies in many parts of the world
- Dropout not yet empirically studied in Luxembourg; no data on HE dropout available (until mid-2010s data on completion rates provided by the University of Luxembourg; ranging from 46.6 % completion (180 ECTS Bachelor programmes) to 81.5 % completion (Master programmes))
- Definition of dropout: students leaving their study programme or the entire HE system
- Eurostudent VII allows for an analysis of mechanisms behind dropout intention

Research question

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- How do individual characteristics impact the dropout intention via student commitment and integration?
- Does institutional support mediate this effect/relationship?



Conceptual framework: The Spady-Tinto models

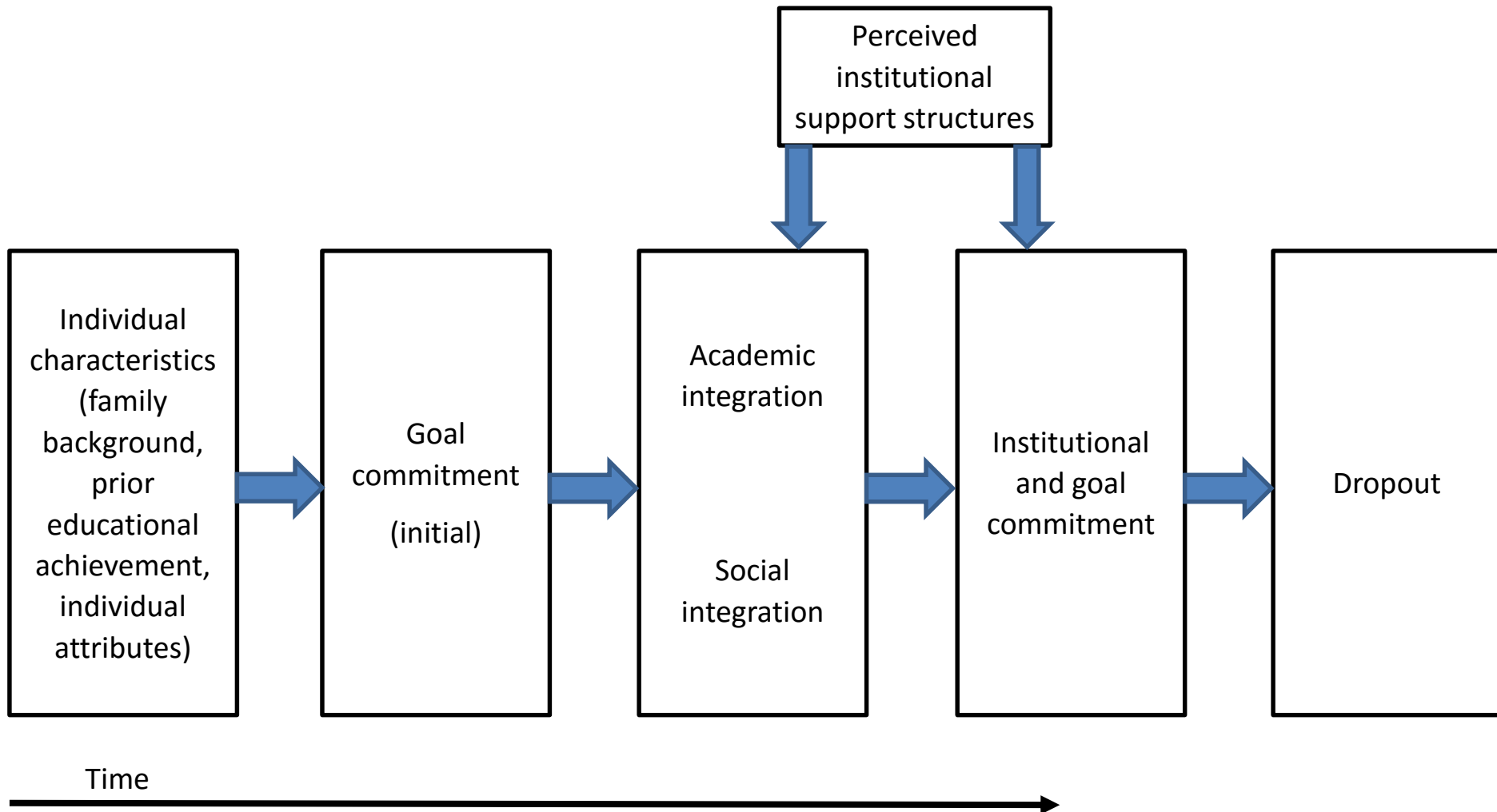
□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



- At the beginning of the 1970s, both Spady and Tinto worked on dropout from HE, summarizing the state of research and synthesising the findings to develop models
- Spady and Tinto did not develop a joint model, Tinto (1975) based his own theorising on a previous model by Spady (1970) that he had reviewed -> thus, we will speak of the Spady–Tinto approach
- Distinct feature: focus on sociological aspects of dropout: (socioeconomic) individual factors and factors relating to the HE institutions with the core aspects of commitment and integration

Conceptual core of the Tinto model and additional feature

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



The Context: Higher education in Luxembourg

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



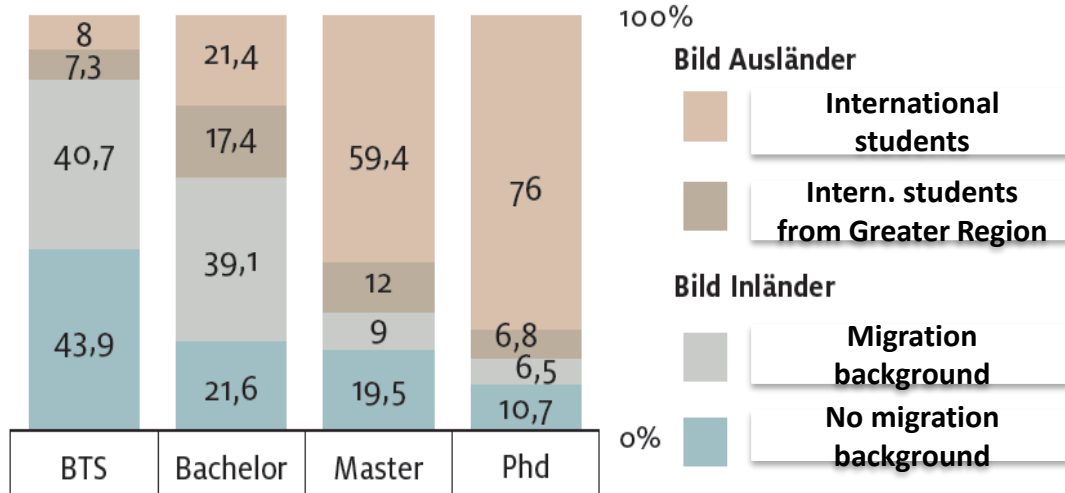
- Majority of students enrol at the only research-focused flagship university, established in 2003, which offers HE degrees at all levels
- Private, mostly field-specific HE exists, but is negligible in terms of overall student enrolment (OECD 2019, 153)
- Another major share of students enrol for vocationally-oriented short-cycle programs (*Formations au Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*, BTS), usually offered by public vocational or upper-secondary schools
- Many international students due to favourable economic situation, study conditions and emphasis on internationalisation and multilingualism

The Context: Higher Education in Luxembourg

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



- Only about 40% of all students are of Luxembourgish origin, but with great variation by degree type



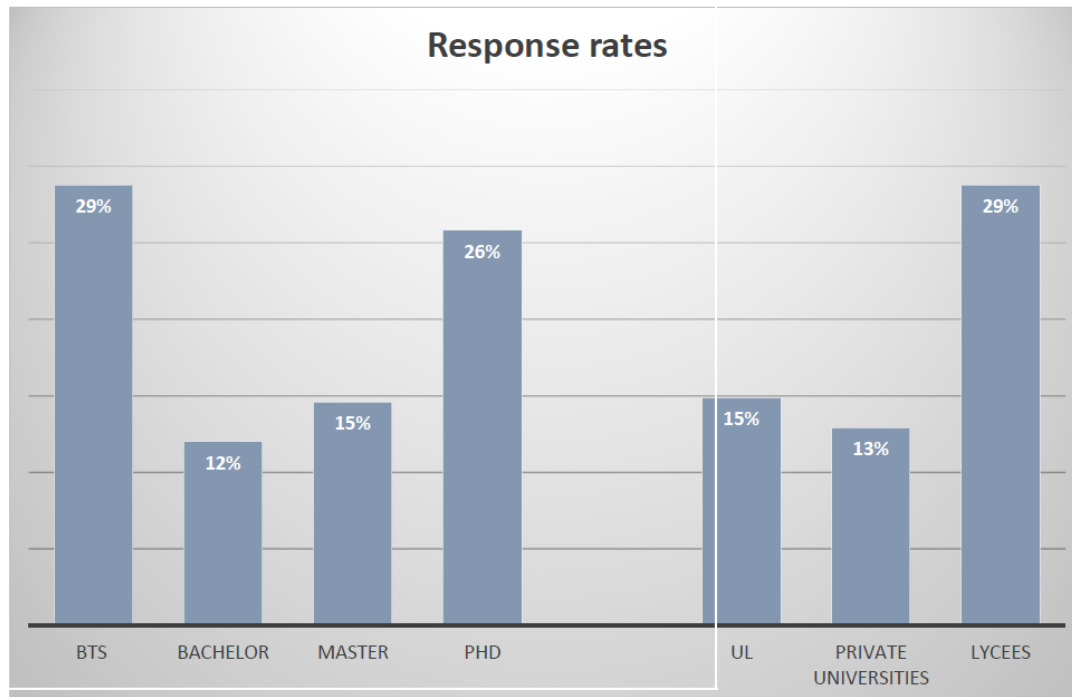
- International students minority in the short-cycle programmes (BTS)

- 85% of all doctoral students are non-Luxembourgish

- Low share of local students also driven by the fact that most school leavers refrain from studying in Luxembourg, thus referring to a long tradition among Luxembourgish families to obtain university education abroad (Rohstock & Schreiber 2013)

EUROSTUDENT VII - Data set

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



- Response rate: 19%
- Strong variation in response rates
- Highest participation among BTS and doctoral students

- Sample: N = 871
- Weighted (age, gender, nationality, study programme/degree type, field of study)

EUROSTUDENT VII – Sample description & controls

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Study programme/ degree type		Short-cycle studies (BTS)	11.8%
		Bachelor	50.4%
		Master	23.8%
		Doctoral studies	14.1%
Gender		Female	52.8%
		Male	47.2%
Migration background	No migration background	None	21.9%
	Migration background; higher education entrance qualification obtained in Luxembourg	Migration background	27.3%
	Migration background; higher education entrance qualification obtained outside Luxembourg	International student	50.9%
Parental level of education	ISCED 0–2: up to lower secondary education	Low	14.8%
	ISCED 3–4: upper-secondary - post-sec.	Medium	31.9%
	ISCED 5–8: tertiary education	High	53.3%
Grade secondary education	Average secondary school completion grade	Below very good	69.1%
		Very good/excellent	31.0%

EUROSTUDENT VII - Measurements

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



<p>Dropout intention (Agree/agree strongly on the items)</p>	<p>"I am seriously thinking about changing my current study program." "I am seriously thinking of completely abandoning my higher education studies."</p>	<p>Dropout intention YES</p>	<p>16.8%</p>
<p>Goal commitment: being convinced of higher education studies</p>	<p>"Generally, to what extent do you agree with the following thoughts regarding your studies? 'It was always clear I would study in higher education one day'."</p>	<p>1 Do not agree at all 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree</p>	<p>6.3% 5.9% 13.1% 21.0% 53.7%</p>
<p>Academic integration: relative achievement</p>	<p>"How would you rate your performance so far in your current study program in comparison to that of your fellow students? Overall, my performance is:"</p>	<p>Much worse – just as good Somewhat/much better</p>	<p>55.1% 44.9%</p>

EUROSTUDENT VII - Measurements

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Institutional support: satisfaction	Mean index score: Satisfaction with the following institutional provisions (1 not sufficient – 5 entirely sufficient): “Study support services (e.g., organized tutoring, (academic) writing/ bridging courses, mentoring),” “Provision of learning facilities (e.g., library, computer center, workplaces),” “Support to balance my studies and paid job,” “Support to balance my studies and family,” “Support in the preparation for my (future) work life”	1 (low) – 5 (high)	Mean 3.3
Social integration: staff/docents	Mean index score: agreement with the following items (1 do not agree at all – 5 strongly agree): "I get along well with the teaching staff in my current study program." "The teaching staff is interested in what I have to say."	1 (low) – 5 (high)	Mean 3.9

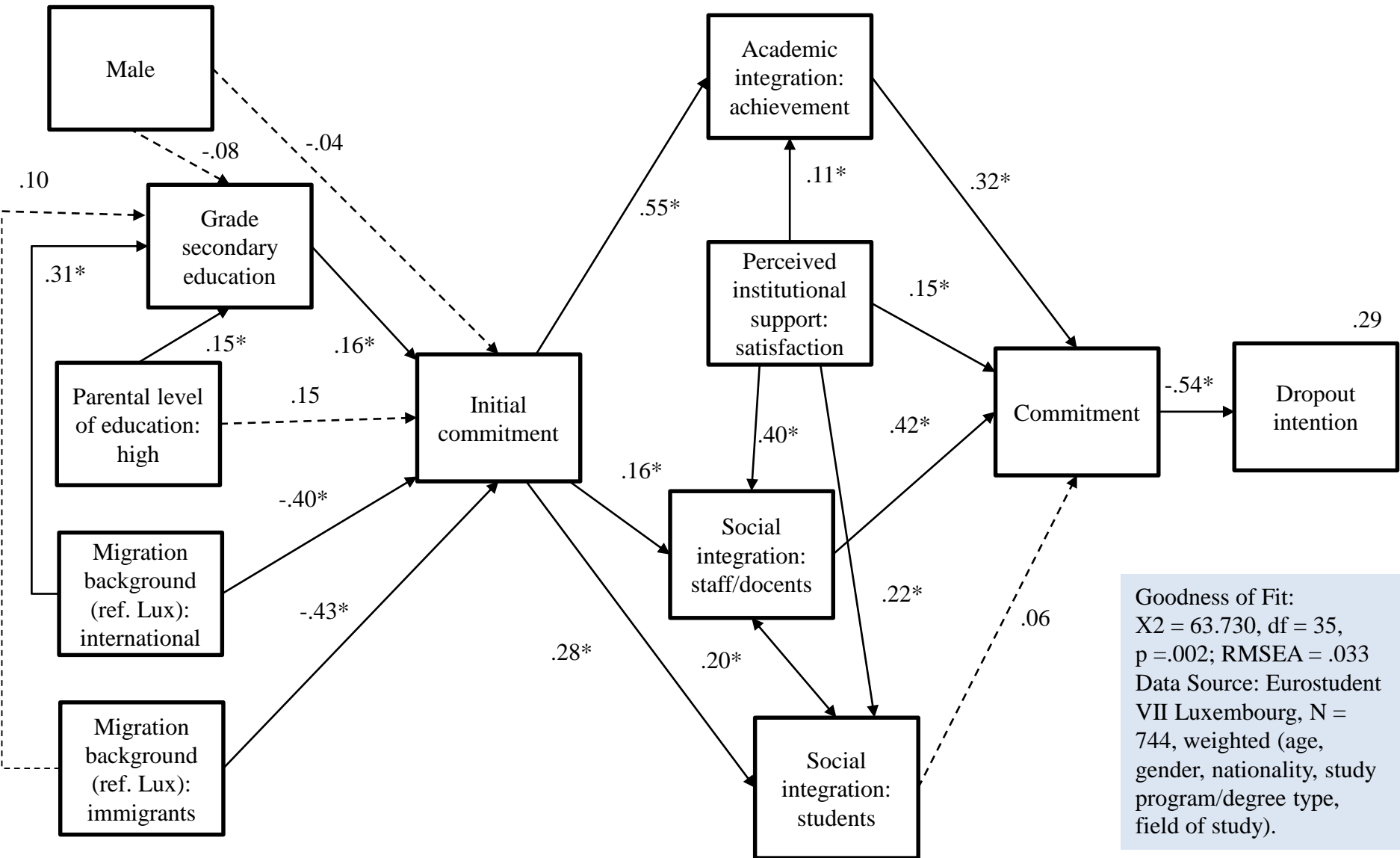
EUROSTUDENT VII - Measurements

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Social integration: fellow students	Mean index score: agreement to the following items (1 do not agree at all – 5 strongly agree): "I know a lot of fellow students with whom I can discuss subject-related questions." "I have contact with many students in my current study program."	1 (low) – 5 (high)	Mean 3.7
Institutional goal commitment	Mean index score: Agreement to the following items (1 do not agree at all – 5 strongly agree): "Now, I really enjoy my degree course.", "Now, I invest a lot of energy in being successful in my degree course ," "I would recommend my current study program."	1 (low) – 5 (high)	Mean 3.9

Results



Goodness of Fit:
 $X^2 = 63.730$, $df = 35$,
 $p = .002$; $RMSEA = .033$
 Data Source: Eurostudent
 VII Luxembourg, $N = 744$,
 weighted (age, gender, nationality,
 study program/degree type,
 field of study).

Conclusions

- Spady–Tinto approach, particularly the Tinto (1975) model, could be reproduced based on current Luxembourgish data
- Paths of the structural equation model resembled the hypothetical scenario derived from the concepts of Spady (1971) and Tinto (1975, 1993) on the linkages between individual characteristics, initial commitment to HE, academic and social integration, commitment (during studies) and dropout intention
- Non-intuitive findings:
 - Gender as an individual characteristic showed no effect on any of the factors
 - Lack of a link between social integration regarding fellow students on study commitment, while social integration regarding docents showed the expected positive effect

Conclusions

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



- Perceived institutional support — a factor we emphasised refining the Spady–Tinto approach — showed significant positive effects on academic integration, social integration (fellow students, docents) and commitment
- Perceiving support by the institution with regard to study support services, learning facilities, in balancing studies, family and paid jobs, and future career prospects, appears to have a key role in the prevention of dropout

■ Limitations

- Relatively small sample size
- Differentiating fields of study might result in further insights with regard to social inequalities underlying dropout intention
- Causality: while our survey reflects a temporal–processual dimension by asking students how they felt about their study decision at different points in time, i.e., prior to enrolment and at the time of the survey, our data are of a retrospective nature, but do not resemble panel data

Thank you for your attention!

□ FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Do not hesitate to contact us with suggestions and questions

andreas.hadjar@uni.lu

christina.haas@uni.lu

irina.gewinner@uni.lu

eurostudent@uni.lu

Stay connected on



socialmedia.uni.lu